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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the characteristics, educational motivations, and opinions of "step-in/step-out" students at Valencia Community College (VCC), the author sent questionnaires to 200 persons selected at random from those who had enrolled for less than 12 hours credit between September 1975 and January 1977 and who were eligible to return but did not do so. Of the 180 respondents, 53% had attended VCC after full-time employment; 86% were employed while attending VCC with over 75% working at least 40 hours per week; 48% desired to attain an Associate degree, while 24% enrolled to update current career fields and 18% for personal enrichment; 64% attended primarily evening classes. Courses were rated "good" or "excellent" by 80% and 93% indicated that they would recommend VCC to others seeking to complete the same courses; 90% plan to continue their education--40% at VCC, 36% at the graduate level, and 16% at another undergraduate institution. Immediately after leaving VCC, 64% were employed full-time, with 14% continuing to attend school part-time while working full-time. The chief reasons for leaving school were lack of finances, heavy employment schedules, and completion of the only course desired. Recommendations are made and the questionnaire is appended. (DC)

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An Analysis of Step-In/Step-Out Students At Valencia Community College

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Lula M. Bennett

Valencia Community College

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

An investigation of the Step-in/Step-out students of Valencia Community College was conducted using 200 students selected at random from those enrolled between September, 1975, and January, 1977. Students selected for study were mailed a questionnaire, a cover letter, and a prepaid return envelop. A follow-up phone call was made to non-respondents. Data from the questionnaire was presented in descriptive form. Findings revealed that the highest percentage of Step-in/Step-out students were night students. Equal numbers were represented by the ex-military as were represented by students right out of high school. Over three-quarters of the students worked 40 hours a week or more. The chief reasons for leaving school were lack of finances, heavy work schedule in employment, and completion of the only course they wished to take. Ninety-two percent indicated they planned to return to VCC or continue their schooling elsewhere. Recommendations included a similiar study of full-time students for comparison purposes, development of a study-skills orientation program, increased effort to promote TV and Saturday classes, and the development of formalized personal assessment and skills development program geared to areas of interest as indicated by this study.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the societal factors which is vital to the community college is the potential resource of students as the community college adapts to changing environments and functions in the years ahead. As is stated in the Nova Module Study Guide, Societal Factors, "the nature of an educational institution is in large measure determined by its students -- those who enroll as well as those who, though eligible,do not (1974, 18)."

Valencia Community College was established to provide educational experiences for the entire adult population within its service area. The purpose of this study was to analyze the extent to which Valencia Community College has provided the educational experiences desired by a special group of students. These students, referred to as Step-in/Step-out, are those who have enrolled for and successfully completed less than twelve (12) hours credit, were eligible to return, but did not do so.

As part of a federal grant funding a five-year long-range planning program, the Advanced Institutional Development Program was interested in obtaining information regarding these Step-in/Step-out students. How would these students evaluate their educational experience at VCC? This study was developed to provide this needed research.

A sample of two hundred Step-in/Step-out students was randomly selected from a computer list. A questionnaire was developed, juried, and then mailed with a cover letter and postage-paid return envelope.

For non-respondents, a follow-up phone call was made. Responses from the 180 respondents were tabulated. Data from the items on the questionnaire were studied to determine students' evaluation of Valencia Community College resources available currently. Student attitudes and needs with respect to a formal personal assessment program as part of the counseling department were studied. Demographic data pertaining to this special group of students and requested by members of the Advanced Institutional Development Program were also secured, tabulated and incorporated into the study. Recommendations based on research data were made.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Because of its policy of equality for all, Gleazer, in American Education (August, 1974) refers to the community college by its often-used title of "people's colleges" or "democracy's colleges." Changes in public attitude and societal needs have produced a tremendous growth in the community college concept. Societal factors, such as the demand for a better trained work force in industry, the health field, and in business coupled with a growth of the democratic principle that one should be educated as far as his abilities and goals enable him to go have resulted in the community college becoming a convenient, relatively low-cost-educational-extension of education beyond high school. The community college campus and the community have become one.

Gleazer (1974) points out further that the community college has become a liberating factor in meeting changing societal needs. Education is equated with opportunity to achieve a productive and satisfying life. By evaluation of the satisfaction of students with their educational program, the community college will be able to respond to societal changes as well as influence the direction in which society moves.

In discussions with Valencia Community College faculty associated with the Advanced Institutional Development Program (AIDP),

the need for a study of the particular group of students selected for this study was revealed. The AIDP staff was interested in a determination of how well Valencia Community College was meeting the needs of these students and in learning whether the addition of an orientation program or alteration of other factors would result in these students returning to school for additional courses. The AIDP staff had agreed to underwrite the expense of mailing the questionnaire. Information regarding results of this practicum desired by the AIDP group was provided to them along with recommendations for action.

Clark Kerr, in an interview edited by W. A. Harper (August, 1975) recalls predictions by the Carnegie Commission and the Council on Policy Studies that, compared with other types of institutions, the enrollment picture of the community college will be bright. Three factors favor the community college: an increase in the student population which is above the usual college age group, a demand for part-time, non-degree credit by the community, and the relatively low cost of community college credit. The community college provides access for older students, part-time students, those who want education that doesn't necessarily lead to a degree and those who come from lower-income families.

Nickens (1976) points to a dismal factor if we fail to look beyone the obvious. He notes that the Junior College Directory in 1968 reported that half the freshmen entering college in 1966 as full

time students failed to re-enroll the following fall. Attrition for part-time students was over sixty-six percent. This can lead to much consternation if we simply label all who do not re-enroll as dropouts, a term denoting failure. In a study of attrition rates comparing four year institutions and two-year colleges, Astin (1972) reported the Community College had a higher drop-out rate which he attributed to "lack of motivation." Using non-enrollment as the criteria for drop-outs, Thornton (1966) reported an attrition rate of fifty percent among community college students. However, Bassen and Burnett (1970) in their follow-up study, reported that one half of those who dropped out of school later returned. Landreth (1971), after identifying eight categories of students, found that each constituted a unique group with definite goals and ambitions which did not include attaining a degree.

De Gracie and others (1974) found no characteristics which were dominant in favoring a student dropping out. The Student Flow Project conducted by the Honolulu Community College System in 1976 revealed that the chief reason for not returning to the same community college in Hawaii was unavailability of desired classes. In spite of such findings, Ebersol's research (1975) indicated that the part-time student is not the usual stereotype, an evening adult student. If we consider a part-time student as one who registers in a given semester for less than twelve academic credit hours, part-time students may constitute fifty percent or more of the total enrollment of community colleges.

As far back as 1956, Reynolds called for more study of the community college student. In 1968, Cross called for more research aimed at studying the student body at the local institution. Bruker and Tuliana (1970) called for more part-time student research and specified development of an instrument that would enable these students to evaluate various college services and the degree the student believed the college had satisfied his needs and enabled him to meet his goals.

If the pattern which is described in the Ace (1974) study continues as Medsker (1971) and Gleazer (1975) predict it will, the community college population will be increasingly composed of part-time, non-high school, economy-minded older clients. Women will increase in numbers. This report has provided feedback to college personnel regarding a variety of services available at Valencia Community College to these part-time students who were successful academically but did not re-enroll. It should enable the college to do as Gleazer (1974) suggested and broaden its concept of community services by determining another market within the community and further translating community perceptions into objectives of the college. Thus, the information gained from this practicum should enable Valencia Community College to better meet the societal needs of its clients in the future.

PROCEDURES

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. Step-in/Step-out Students - Students who enrolled for and successfully completed less than twelve (12) hours of credit, had an overall C average and did not return to VCC.

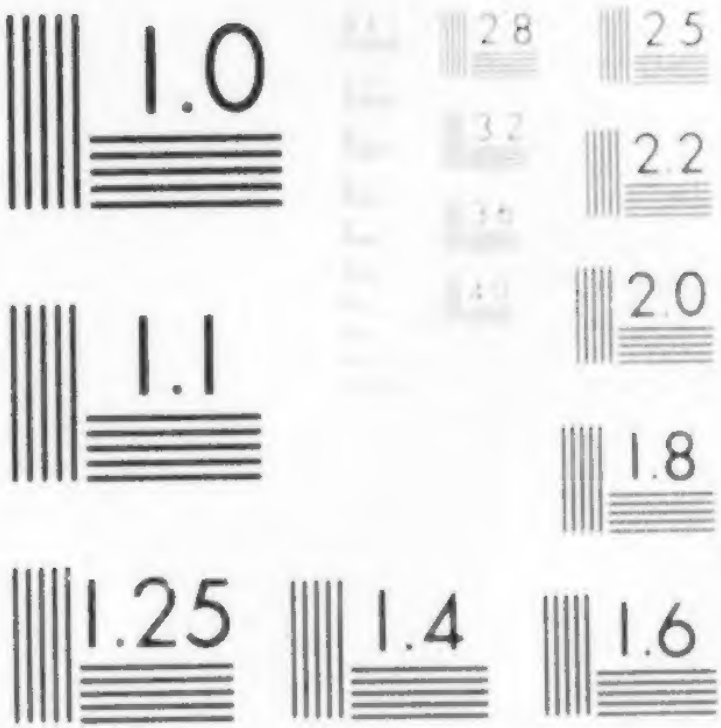
2. AIDP - Advanced Institutional Development Program, a federally funded five year study specifically designed to enable Valencia Community College to assess community needs and revise and develop programs to meet these needs.

3. Universe - Total of those students enrolled at VCC from September, 1975, through January, 1977, who completed less than 12 hours credit, had a C average and were eligible to return to school but did not do so.

Limitations

The following limitations were recognized in study:

1. The major limitation of the study was that it was based on responses to a mail-out questionnaire. For this type data, Kerlinger (1966) indicated a response of 80-90 percent was necessary in order to make valid interpretations. With less than 80-90 percent response, the study may not adequately sample non-respondents.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

2. Despite a jury's validation of the questionnaire to be used in the study, a possible limitation existed that questions might be viewed as ambiguous and hard to define and answer.

3. In an effort to keep the questionnaire length to a single page, front and back, question 7 asked students to list reasons for not returning to school in the order of their importance. Categorizing and computing responses to open-ended questions could have presented problems in interpreting statements. Some students could refuse to write out responses, preferring to check items listed. Such a list was felt to be impractical.

Basic Assumptions

In initiating this study, a number of assumptions were made:

1. It was assumed that the questionnaire would not be too difficult to understand or to complete.

2. It was assumed that a satisfactory percentage of responses would be returned, using the phone follow-up if necessary, to enable the researcher to validly interpret the data derived from the study.

3. It was assumed that the data generated by the study would provide the AIDP staff and other interested groups of the college with information which would enable them to better determine student needs and broaden the concept of community needs and desires.

The procedures followed in developing this practicum were as follows:

Students who enrolled at Valencia Community College (VCC) from September, 1975, through January, 1977, completed less than twelve (12) credit hours, had a grade point average sufficient for re-enrollment, and yet did not return were the subject of this study. A sample of two hundred students from the universe which met these requirements were selected at random from an alphabetized computer list. A random numbers table using the last three digits of the student's social security number was the method of selection.

The survey was conducted by an adaption of a written follow-up questionnaire developed by Jack Mahon, Bucks County Community College (1974). The questionnaire was adapted to include items of particular value and interest to members of Valencia Community College collegues working with the AIDP. After items were developed to obtain information requested by AIDP, the questionnaire was juried by three faculty members including instructors from the Communications Department, the Counseling Department, and a member of the AIDP team. The questionaire was then tested with twenty students in a political science class. The modified questionnaire (see Appendix A) proved satisfactory to the students and acceptable to the "jury".

Each student in the sample was given a number (001 - 200) which was used on the return envelope as part of the return address. As questionnaires were returned, names were marked off the computer list. This allowed for an identification of non-respondents so that

follow-up phone calls could be made. Non-respondents were phoned in the late afternoon or early evening during the third week after questionnaires were mailed out. Whenever possible, and more often than not, the non-respondents answered the questions over the phone, which took less than five minutes. Those who had completed the questionnaire were urged to mail them at once. When a subject had moved (total: 15), a random numbers table was used to select a new sample member. The usual follow-up phone call was made where necessary.

After a cut-off period of five weeks, the data generated by the study were tabulated. A percentage analysis of responses to individual items on the questionnaire was developed. An attempt was made to develop a profile of the Step-in/Step-out student at VCC and to assess the degree to which the College had met the needs and expectations of these students.

Additionally, it was the purpose of this procedure to enable VCC to fulfill its responsibility by obtaining information about former students who, although they did not graduate, had been identified as successful in the college academic program.

RESULTS

Table 1 below presents distribution, response, and percentage information pertaining to the questionnaire used in this study. Ninety percent (N = 180) of the questionnaires were returned.

Table 1

Response Data of Questionnaire Distribution, Responses Received, and Percentage of Responses

	Distribution	Responses	Percent
Questionnaires	200	180	90%

Table 2,(page 11), presents the number of responses and percentage of response to Question 1 relating to a description of educational goal in attending VCC.

Table 2

Educational - Goal Responses

Question 1. "Which option best describes your educational goal in attending VCC?"

Response Selection	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Earn an A.A. (transfer) degree	60	29
2. Earn an A.S. (career) degree	39	19
3. Update my current career field	48	24
4. Prepare for promotion in current field	9	4

5. Retrain for another career	9	4
6. Personal enrichment	36	18
7. Meet people	3	2

The most frequent response was "to earn an AA (transfer degree, 29%). Forty-eight students (24%) were seeking to update their career field. The third and fourth choice most frequently selected was 39 students (19%) to "earn an AS (career) degree and 36 students (18%) for "personal enrichment." Other choices fell below 10%.

Table 3 presents data describing the students' status upon entering VCC.

Table 3

Student Status Upon Admission

Question 2: "Which best describes your status when you first entered VCC?"

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Entered shortly after dropping out of high school	3	1
2. Entered directly after graduation from high school	21	13
3. Entered shortly after military service	21	13
a) 1-10 years service	(6)	(28)
b) 11-20 years service	(6)	(28)
c) 21-30 years service	(9)	(44)

4. Entered after full-time employment	87	53
a) 1-10 years employment	(48)	(55)
b) 11-20 years employment	(24)	(27)
c) 21-30 years employment	(9)	(10)
d) 31-40 years employment	(6)	(7)
5. Transferred from another two-year college	12	7
6. Transferred from a four-year institution	21	13

Eighty-seven students (53%) attended VCC after full time employment. The number who entered directly after high school graduation was equal to the number who entered shortly after military service and who transferred from a four year institution, (13%).

Of those who entered from military service, 28% served in the one to ten years or eleven to twenty years. Forty-four percent served from twenty-one to thirty years. Those who had been (or were) employed full time had worked from one to ten years (55%) or eleven to twenty years (27%). Less than 20% had worked over twenty years.

Table 4 presents data relating to employment of student while attending VCC.

Table 4

Student Employment Status

Question 3: "Were you employed while attending VCC?"

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Yes	150	86
2. No	24	14

Question 3a: "If yes, how many hours of employment did you average per week?"

1-10 hours per week	6	4
11-20 hours per week	21	14
21-30 hours per week	21	14
31-40 hours per week	81	54
41-50 hours per week	12	8
51-60 hours per week	3	2
61-70 hours per week	6	14

Of the 174 students responding to numbers of hours worked while attending VCC, 150 students (86%) reported being employed; 14% were not employed. Forty-two students reported working either 11-20 hours (21) or 21-30 hours per week (21). The most frequent number reported was 31-40 hours (54%). Six students (14%) reported working 61-70 hours per week with 8 students (12%) working 41-50 hours per week.

Table 5 refers to the time of day the students in this study attended classes.

Table 5

Time of Day of Classes Attended

Question 4: "The majority of my classes while attending VCC were 1) day classes, 2) evening classes, 3) Saturday or TV classes."

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. day classes	60	33
2. evening classes	117	64
3. Saturday or TV classes	6	3

A majority of students, 117 (64%), were enrolled for evening classes. Approximately one third of the students (60) were in day classes. Six students (3%) elected Saturday classes or were enrolled in TV classes.

Table 6

Changes of Major Fields of Study

Question 5: "Did you change your major field of study while at VCC?"

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Yes	9	5
2. No	162	93

Table 6 presents the results regarding changing major field of study while these students were enrolled at VCC. Of the 171 students responding, 93% did not change their major field of study while at VCC. Of the 5% who did change their major, four stated they changed majors two times; the remaining five changed once.

Table 7 presents responses describing student status immediately after leaving VCC. (Question 6).

Table 7

Status Immediately After Leaving School

Question 6: "Please check the response which best describes your status immediately after leaving VCC."

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Military service	0	0
2. Employed full time, student part time	24	14
3. Employed full time, student full time	9	6
4. Employed full time, did not attend school	81	50
5. Employed part time, student part time	0	0
6. Employed part time, student full time	18	11
7. Employed part time, did not attend school	9	6
8. Homemaker, full time	12	7
9. Homemaker, volunteer work	3	2
10. Other	6	4

Upon leaving VCC, 81 students (50%) were employed full time without attending school. Twenty-four students (14%) were employed full time but continued to go to school part time. Eighteen students (11%) were employed part time and were enrolled full time at a learning institution. Other categories received less than a 10 percent response.

Question 7, "Students discontinue attendance at VCC for a variety of reasons. Please list the three most important factors in your leaving VCC in their order of importance," elicited a variety of responses. Of the students responding (180), 15 gave no reasons,

98 gave one reason, 36 gave two reasons, and 30 listed three reasons.

Some general categories of responses involved the following:

1. "Completed the only course I wanted to take" - 45
2. "Work schedule too heavy" - 25
3. Financial pressures - 28
4. Got married - 6
5. Took a full time job and gave up school - 18
6. Family problems (generally illness of family member) - 10
7. Problems with Veterans Administration - 6
8. Too far to drive (Kissimmee/St Cloud) - 3
9. Took course for recertification - 10
10. Business pressure - 4
11. Couldn't get courses I wanted - 6
12. No interest - 4

Sample comments include the following:

"I have already graduated from college and took the course at the request of my employer."
"Waiting for my husband to get his degree."
"Working full time and not enough time for studies"
"Too much time away from family."
"Job travel"
"Time" .... "Limited time"...."Other pressing needs for my time."
"I was tired of school for a while."
"Lack of funds."
"Difficult to find time to work, study, and attend classes plus live the rest of my life."
"Additional education would not assure additional salary at my present job."
"Additional activities of social club, church, take up time."
"Full time work and homemaking take most of my time."
"Hours of work got too long."
"Changed my mind about major."
"Getting married."
"Couldn't afford school full time"

"Couldn't devote sufficient time to my studies."
"Employment"
"Money"
"Did not know what I was going to school for."
"Did not have any future plans at the time."
"Money for classes."
"Work schedule would not permit attending."
"Could not get classes I needed on nights off."
"Took two courses for personal enrichment."
"I was only keeping up with my study skills so they wouldn't be rusty later on."
"Valencia did not offer the course I needed at night."
"I enrolled at Valencia to take tennis lessons. I never planned to attend full time."
"Lack of sufficient finances to pursue course schedule."
"Work schedule too heavy ... that's all."
"Classes not exactly what I was looking for."
"Dissatisfied with instruction in field of child development."
"Work load at job did not allow needed study time."
"TV program certainly helps when fully employed. Thanks. That was all I wanted."
"Expense grew too high for me to continue at the time. Will be back later."
"Didn't like Dr. _____, need to make course more relevant and meaningful."

Table 8 and Figure 1, page 18 , presents the results of the students' ratings of selected resources which they might have used while at VCC (Placement Office, Admissions Office, Counseling Center, Financial Aids Office, Academic Faculty, and Learning Resource Center).

Table 8

Student Rating of Resources

Item 8: "Please rate the following resources that were used by you at VCC."

	Resource	Rating	Number	Percent of Total of Respondents
1.	Placement Office	Superior	0	0
		Good	21	16
		Fair	3	2
		Poor	0	0
		Cannot Rate	105	82

2.	Admissions Office	Superior	21	13
		Good	69	42
		Fair	39	24
		Poor	12	6
		Cannot Rate	24	15
3.	Counseling Center	Superior	24	17
		Good	48	34
		Fair	6	4
		Poor	3	2
		Cannot Rate	60	43
4.	Financial Aids Office	Superior	0	0
		Good	15	12
		Fair	3	2
		Poor	3	2
		Cannot Rate	105	84
5.	Academic Faculty	Superior	36	24
		Good	81	54
		Fair	9	6
		Poor	0	0
		Cannot Rate	24	16
6.	Learning Resource Center	Superior	21	15
		Good	60	43
		Fair	6	4
		Poor	0	0
		Cannot Rate	51	38

Of the students surveyed, 82% replied that they could not rate the Placement Office compared with zero percent(0%) who rated it superior and 2% who rated it fair. Sixteen percent indicated they found the Placement office "good."

In evaluating the Admissions Office, 13% indicated they found it superior; 42% responded with "good." Thirty percent felt it was less than good (fair or poor). Fifteen percent reported that they could not rate this resource.

STUDENT RATING OF RESOURCES

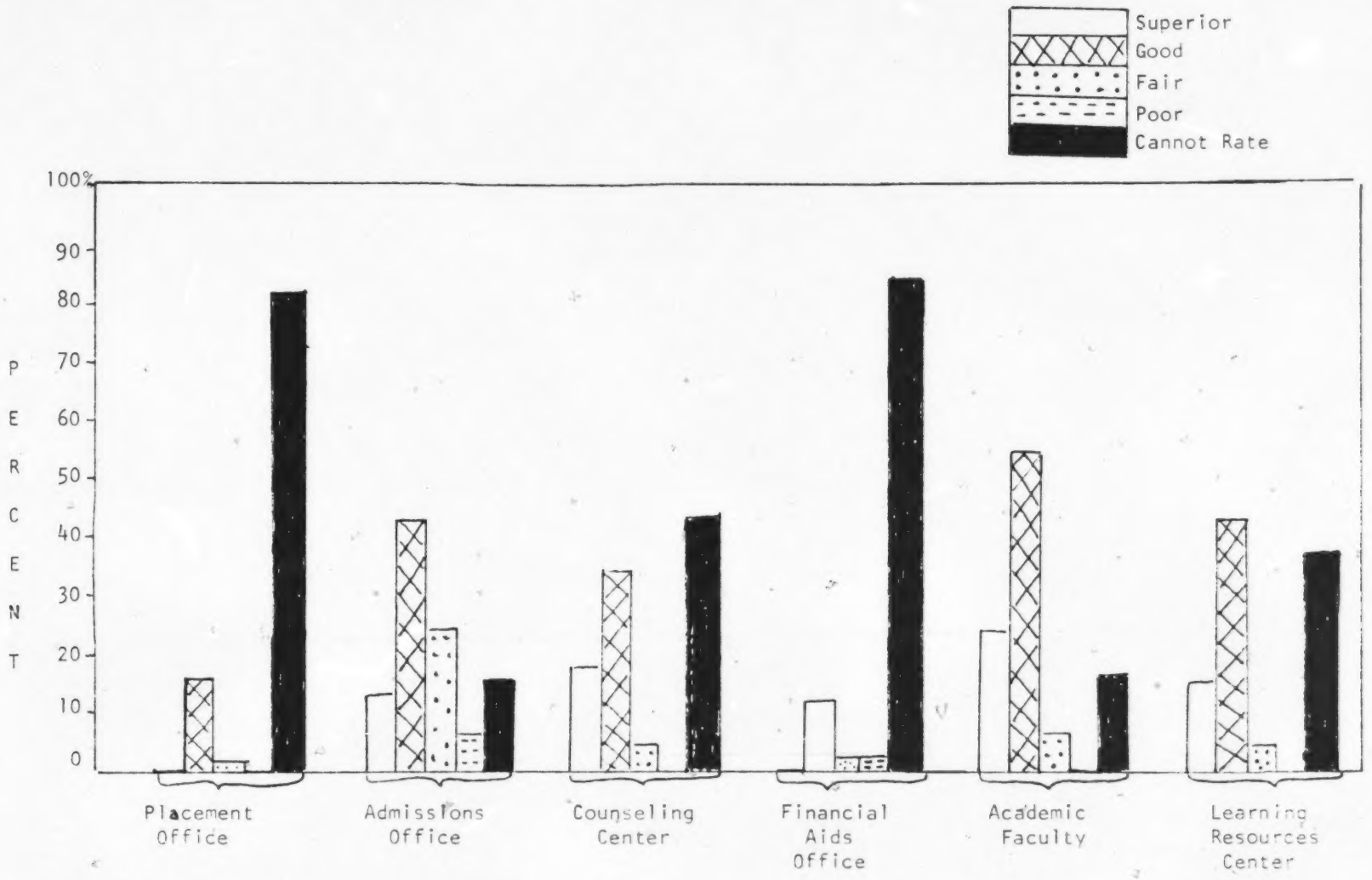


Figure 1

Regarding the Counseling Service, over 50% selected "good" or"superior" as their assessment of the center. Six percent rated the counseling service as less than good (fair or poor). Forty-three percent selected "cannot rate" as their response.

Eighty-four percent (84%) of respondents elected "cannot rate" as their response to the Financial Aids office. Of the sixteen (16%) percent who responded to a definite rating, 75% rated the resource "good" (12 students). Two percent (2%) each rated the service "fair" and "poor."

Twenty-four percent (24%) of those responding rated the academic faculty "superior"; 54% said they were "good." No student selected "poor"; 6% selected "fair" and 16% responded with "cannot rate."

Regarding the Learning Resource Center (LRC), 15% elected "superior"; no student indicated the resource was "poor." The most frequent response was "good", 43%, compared with 38% indicating they could not rate LRC. Four percent selected "fair" as their response.

Table 9 presents student responses relating to Question 9, an assessment of how well VCC met the students' educational objectives.

Table 9

Response Data: Educational Objectives and Program of Study

Item 9: "How well did your program of study at VCC meet yours educational objectives?"

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total of Respondents
1. Excellent	57	32
2. Good	87	48
3. Fair	18	10
4. Poor	3	2
5. Does Not Apply	15	8

Eighty-seven students (48%) reported that the program of study at VCC was "good" in meeting their educational objectives. Fifty-seven students, or 32 percent, reported that the program of study was "excellent"; 10% rated it as fair and 8% (15 students) responded that the question did not apply. Three students (2%) stated the program of study was "poor" in meeting their educational objectives.

Table 10 presents data responses to Question 10; an assessment of how well the VCC program of study met the student's occupational objectives.

Table 10

Occupational Objectives and Program of Study-Student Responses

Item 10: "How well did your program of study at VCC meet your occupational objectives?"

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Excellent	33	19
2. Good	69	39
3. Fair	27	15
4. Poor	6	3
5. Does Not Apply	42	24

Sixty-nine students (39%) indicated the program of study at VCC was "good" in meeting their educational objectives; thirty-three students (19%) opted for a response of "excellent." Twenty-seven students (15%) reported the program was "fair"; six students (3%) said "poor", and 42 students responded that the question "does not apply."

Questionnaire item 11 asked, "Would you recommend VCC to a person seeking to complete the same course or program that you studied here?" A total of 180 responses were received. Of these, 168 (93%) responded affirmatively. Twelve students (7%) answered, "No."

Table 11

Recommendation of VCC-Student Response

Item 11: "Would you recommend VCC to a person seeking to complete the same course or program you studied here?"

Response Choices	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
Yes	168	93
No	12	7

Table 12 presents information regarding student plans to continue their education.

Table 12

Student Response Data - Plans to Continue Education
Item 12: "Do you plan to continue your education?"

Response Choice	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1. Yes, at VCC	66	40
2. Yes, at undergraduate level but not at VCC	27	16
3. Yes, at graduate level	60	36
4. No	12	8

Sixty-six students (40%) indicated they planned to continue their at VCC. Sixty students (36%) plan to continue to graduate level. Twenty-seven students (16%)plan to continue in school but at institutions other

than VCC. Twelve students (8%), of 165 responding, stated they did not plan to continue in school anywhere.

Table 13 presents data regarding students' perceptions of the benefits of a formalized personal assessment program at VCC had such a program been available. Of the 171 students responding to this item, 108 (63%) said, "yes", while 63 (37%) responded, "no." The data applies to the 63% who responded affirmatively.

Table 13

Student Response - Need for Formal Assessment Programs

Item 11: "If yes, check each area which have been helpful to you."

Response Choice		Number	Percent of Total Respondents
1.	Manual Dexterity	12	3
2.	Value Clarifications	27	7
3.	Academic Aptitude	36	9
4.	Career Choice and Opportunities	48	12
5.	Goal Identification/Clarification	39	10
6.	Study Skills	33	8
7.	Reading Skills	18	5
8.	Math Skills	18	5
9.	Writing Skills	21	5
10.	Testing Skills	36	9
11.	Time Management Skills	36	9
12.	Money Management Skills	18	5
13.	Decision-making Skills	33	8
14.	Personal Adjustment	21	5

Three hundred and ninety-six choices were made by the respondents. The most frequent choice was "career choice and opportunities (12%). Thirty-six responses each were received for "academic aptitude," testing skills," and "time management skills." Thirty-nine persons (10%) selected "goal identification/clarification." Thirty-three people (8%) indicated a desire for a program involving "study skills" and/or "decision-making skills." Five percent of respondents indicated a need for assistance in "personal adjustment," "writing skills," "reading skills," "math skills," and/or "money management skills." Three percent indicated a perceived need for a program in "manual dexterity."

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Implications

As shown on Table 1, page 11, valid interpretations could be made from the student responses to the questionnaire on which this study was based. The response rate of return met Kerlinger's (1966) suggested return rate of 80-90 percent as a satisfactory response rate.

An observation of data (Table 2, p.11) indicated that, among the sample group, 5% more planned to earn an AA (transfer) degree (29%) than were attending school in order to update their current career field (24%). Fewer students were preparing for an AS (career) degree (19%) than were preparing to go on to a four year institution (29%). Over 40% of the total enrollment of the sample group were preparing for a career. Thirty-six respondents (18%) apparently opted to attend school for "personal enrichment." Forty-eight students (24%) indicated they had attended school in order to update their current career field, whereas, only 8% of the respondees attended based upon an anticipated promotion or in order to retrain for another career.

Table 3 indicated that 53% of those respondees who elected to enter school had been working for some time (p.13). Over 50% had been working ten years or less while over a quarter of the students had worked between 11-20 years before entering school. Seventeen percent (17%) worked over twenty years. The number who had been in the military just before enrolling in school (13%) equaled those who came directly from

high school (13%). Forty-four percent of the ex-military had over twenty years in the service. An analysis of data suggested that a large number of retired military were updating their current career or were retraining for another career.

One hundred fifty students (86%) specified that they were employed while attending VCC (Table 4, page 13). Fourteen (14) percent were not employed. Apparently over 75% of those students in the sample group worked while going to school and over half (54%) were employed between 31 and 40 hours a week.

A large number of students listed reasons for discontinuing education as conflict of work schedule or a heavy work load which did not leave time for studying. Almost a quarter of the students designated work schedules involving between 41 and 70 hours a week - a very heavy employment load by any standard. Only 3% of the sample group enrolled in Saturday or TV classes.

Results of this study indicated that most of the respondents (93%) knew what they wanted as far as a major field of study was concerned. There was very little switching of programs of study among this group. No student changed his major more than two times. Over 50% of those who changed did so only one time.

Upon leaving school, 50% of the students were employed full time and did not attend school, (Table 7). Comments referring to employment work load and finances made this predictable. Fourteen (14) percent of the responses (Table 7) indicated that although these

former students were employed full time, they had enrolled in school elsewhere and were part time students. This is in keeping with responses in Table 12 (page 24) in which 16% of the sample students indicated they planned to attend school elsewhere at the undergraduate level, but not at VCC. Nine (9) percent indicated they became homemakers, with or without outside volunteer activities after leaving VCC, (Table 7), in contrast to 18% who took courses for personal enrichment (Table 2). Immediately upon leaving VCC, six percent (6%) of the students were employed full time and were students full time but not at VCC (Table 7).

Question 7 inquiring (page 16) into reasons for leaving VCC revealed that finances and a heavy schedule at place of employment were very important reasons for discontinuing school. The largest single reason (45 responses) for leaving school was the completion of the only course the student wanted to take. This clearly indicated that the college had met the needs of this group of students. Apparently the college is meeting the needs of the 5% of the sample group who needed courses (generally 6 hours) for recertification. A small number of students (six) indicated that courses they desired were not available.

Table 8 and Figure 1 presents data relating to evaluating resources at VCC.

Table 8 and Figure 1 indicated that a high percentage of the Step-in/Step-out students couldn't "talk" about the resources presently available at VCC. Fifteen percent (15%) of the students responded that they couldn't rate the Admissions Office, but they must have gone

through that office at least once. Forty-three percent selected "cannot rate" regarding the counseling office, yet, Table II indicates that a large number of students (63%) (Forty-eight students indicated a need for a personal assessment program in Career Choices and Opportunities) stated a desire for more counseling services.

Despite the large number of students who indicated financial problems were partially responsible for their leaving school, 84% could not rate the Financial Aids Office (See page 16,Question 7.)

Although three-fourths of the respondents rated the academic faculty as "good" or "superior", 16% could not rate them. It is possible that these students were in career programs and did not associate their instructors with "academic faculty." The word "academic" could have presented a problem. It is interesting to reflect on whether adjunct faculty made such a distinction in their minds and transferred this concept to some of their students. These students could have responded to the work "academic" as being different from "adjunct."

Of the 38% who could not rate the LRC, it was not known whether these students had no need of the Learning Resources Center, had no need to find out about the Center and, therefore, had no basis for comparison, or simply chose not to use the facilities and opportunities for service provided by the center.

It is possible that in some instances, such as the evaluation of the academic faculty, those who selected "cannot rate" (16%) were to be expected if students were simply not discriminating in their

responses. However, this did not appear to be the case because under "academic faculty" no student selected "poor." The possibility that the questionnaire was not valid existed. The possibility existed also that the sample selected did not present a "representative sample."

In general, except for the Financial Aids Office and the Placement Office, all resources evaluated received a rating of over 50% as "good" or "superior." In all categories of resources, except the Admissions Office (6%), less than 5% rated the services as "poor." Except for the 24% "fair" rating for the Admission Office and 6% "fair" for the academic faculty, "fair" ratings for all services fell below 5%. Data would indicate a reasonably successful program for the resources made available to students at VCC. The real concern appears to rest with the large number of students who felt they could not rate these resources as is discussed above.

Table 9 revealed that the respondents generally assessed their program of study at VCC as being satisfactory. Thirty-two percent (32%) elected to rate their program as "excellent" while 48% said it was "good." Twelve percent (12%) exercised the options of "fair" or "poor." Fifteen students responded that the question did not apply. It is possible that these students were confused by the question or they could have taken courses for "personal enrichment" and did not consider these as part of an "educational objective."

Responses assessing how well the program of study met occupational objectives (Table 10) were a little lower than those for the educational objectives. Nineteen percent (19%) responded to "excellent" (compared to 32% for educational objectives) and 39% specified "good" (compared

to 48% - educational objectives). However these differences may not be statistically significant. Fifteen percent rated the system "fair", 5% more than the responses for educational objectives. The number responding "Does not apply" rose from 8% for educational objectives to 24% for occupational objectives. The data could suggest that courses are not geared to the "real world" as is suggested by the comment, "make course more relevant and meaningful," (page 18). A large proportion of students apparently were not enrolled for any direct occupational goals (Table 2; all areas but #2, 3, 4 and 5).

Question 11 relating to a student recommending VCC to a friend received 93% response to the affirmative. Apparently VCC was meeting the objective, requirements and perceived needs of the students questioned.

A question relating to reason (s) for leaving VCC has been discussed (Table 7, page 15). When asked about future plans regarding their education (Table 12), 40% indicated they planned to return to VCC. Sixteen (16) percent intended to continue at the undergraduate level elsewhere. Sixty students (36%) indicated they planned to continue at the graduate level. Several variables may have operated here. Some of these students may have been teachers seeking recertification, degree persons seeking to update their skills, or persons who did not understand the question. Eight percent (8%) declared an intention to discontinue school permanently. Specific reasons were not clear.

Sixty-three (63) percent (Table 13) of those questioned indicated they felt they would have benefited from a formalized personal assessment

program. The area of highest interest was "Career Choice and Opportunities," (12%) followed closely by 10% of the respondents who felt a need for "Goal identification/clarification." "Academic aptitude", "Testing skills", and "Time management skills", each received a 9% preference. This was not surprising considering the number of students whose comments indicated a "pressure of time" or difficulty in finding time to devote to studies. Data indicated that available resources are not known to students (#1, 3, 4, and 6, "cannot rate" segment of Table 8 and Fig. 1). VCC has a math lab, a reading lab which includes testing and study skills (8%) response, and a Career lab. Five (5) percent of the students responding indicated an interest in Reading, Math, Writing, money management and personal adjustment skills. Twenty-seven students (7%) indicated an interest in value clarification skills. Data indicated that a formalized personal assessment program was of interest to a sizeable group of students with specific areas of identified-need varying.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data gathered and analyzed in this study, the following recommendations were submitted:

1. A study similar to this should be conducted using full time students to determine if the experimental population (Step-in/ Step-out) responses differ significantly from the full-time student.

2. Because of a time lapse between a student's leaving secondary school and coming to VCC, it was recommended that a study skills orientation program built around an optional plan with flexible scheduling be developed. The program should be available evenings and weekends (Saturday morning and/or Sunday afternoon.)

3. It was recommended that effort be made to counsel students who are considering withdrawal (from a course or from school). Data indicated that problems are frequently of a nature that, if help could be given during a difficult period, withdrawal could be prevented.

4. It was recommended that consideration be given to offering classes needed by students on weekends and evenings. If student needs are not being perceived by the college, then a procedure for recording classes desired by, but not available to, students should be developed through the counseling or admissions department.

5. It was recommended that the counseling department develop

a formalized program of personal assessment and skill development geared first toward those areas of greatest student interest as demonstrated by this study. This program should be extended in time to cover all areas of interest. Hours should be flexible and include evenings and weekends. Enrollment should be optional, but publicity should be well planned, of a high quality geared to sell and publicize the concept, and continuous throughout the year.

6. It was strongly recommended that the resources available at VCC (6 Items, Table 8) be reevaluated regarding the Step-in/Step-out students. The questionnaire (adjusted to remove "academic" from the faculty resource assessment item, Table 8) should be repeated to validate the gravity of the problem as indicated by this study. Procedures within the resources could then be varied so that the Step-In/Step-Out Group would more fully utilize available resources.

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APPENDIX

VALENCIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
P.O. BOX 3028 ORLANDO, FLORIDA 32802

May, 1977

Dear Alumnus:

The Advanced Development Instructional Program staff is undertaking a study of former students of Valencia Community College. We believe it is important to know how alumni feel about their experience with the educational program at Valencia if current practice is to be improved.

Even though you may have enrolled for only one or two courses, I hope that as a former student at Valencia you will be willing to share with us your insight and experience. The enclosed questionnaire should take only about five minutes of your time. We think you may find it interesting.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Your responses will be maintained in strict confidence with only group responses being reported.

Your contribution to the success of this study is most important and deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Nikki Bennett

NIKKI M. BENNETT
AIDP Study

Enclosures

FOLLOW-UP ON FORMER STUDENTS

Please check the appropriate answer.

1. Which option best describes your educational goal in attending Valencia Community College?

   1 ( ) Earn an A.A. (transfer) degree
   2 ( ) Earn an A.S. (career) degree
   3 ( ) Update my current career field
   4 ( ) Prepare for promotion in current career field
   5 ( ) Retrain for another career
   6 ( ) Personal enrichment
   7 ( ) Meet people

2. Which best describes your status when you first entered V.C.C.?

   1 ( ) Entered shortly after dropping out of high school
   2 ( ) Entered directly after graduation from high school
   3 ( ) Entered shortly after military service
   How many years were you in military service?_____ years.
   4 ( ) Entered after full-time employment
   How many years were you employed full time? _____ years.
   5 ( ) Transferred from another two-year college
   6 ( ) Transferred from a four-year institution

3. Were you employed while attending V.C.C.?

   1 ( ) Yes 2 ( ) No

   If yes, how many hours of employment did you average per week? ____ Hours.

4. The majority of my classes while attending V.C.C. were

   1 ( ) day classes 2 ( ) evening classes 3 ( ) Saturday or TV classes

5. Did you change your major field of study while at V.C.C.?

   1 ( ) Yes 2 ( ) No

   If yes, how many times did you change your major? _____ times.

6. Please check the response which best describes your status immediately after leaving V.C.C.:

   1 ( ) military service
   2 ( ) employed full time, student part time
   3 ( ) employed full time, student full time
   4 ( ) employed full time, did not attend school
   5 ( ) employed part time, student part time
   6 ( ) employed part time, student full time
   7 ( ) employed part time, did not attend school
   8 ( ) home maker, full time
   9 ( ) home maker, volunteer work
   10 ( ) Other (explain:_____)

Please turn page over and complete other side.

Please check the appropriate answer.

7. Students discontinue attendance at V.C.C. for a variety of reasons. Please list the three most important factors in your leaving VCC in their order of importance:

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1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

8. Please rate the following resources that were used by you at V.C.C.:

	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor	Cannot Rate
Placement Office	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
Admissions Office.....	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
Counseling Center.....	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
Financial Aid Office.....	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
Academic Faculty.....	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
Learning Resource Center..	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )

9. How well did your program of study at V.C.C. meet your educational objectives?

1( ) Excellent 2( ) Good 3( ) Fair 4( ) Poor 5( ) Does not Apply

10. How well did your program of study at V.C.C. meet your occupational objective?

1( ) Excellent 2( ) Good 3( ) Fair 4( ) Poor 5( ) Does not Apply

11. Would you recommend V.C.C. to a person seeking to complete the same course or program that you studied here?

1( ) Yes 2( ) No

12. Do you plan to continue your education?

1( ) Yes, at VCC
2( ) Yes, at the undergraduate level but not at VCC
3( ) Yes, at the graduate level
4( ) No

13. Would a formalized personal assessment have been helpful to you while attending V.C.C.?

1( ) Yes 2( ) No

If yes, check each area which would have been helpful to you:

1( ) Manual dexterity
2( ) Value clarification
3( ) Academic aptitude
4( ) Career choice and opportunities
5( ) Goal identification/clarification
6( ) Study skills
7( ) reading skills
8( ) Math skills
9( ) Writing skills
10( ) Testing skills
11( ) Time management skills
12( ) Money management skills
13( ) Decision-making skills
14( ) Personal Adjustment

Thank you for your cooperation and for returning this questionnaire promptly.